

*Written Testimony*

*Aging Committee*

*February 25, 2016*

*Elizabeth B. Ritter, State Department on Aging*

Senator Flexer, Representative Serra, Senator Kelly, Representative Bolinsky and distinguished members of the Aging Committee. My name is Betsy Ritter. I am the Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am here today to offer testimony in opposition to SB 165: AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM.

The State Department on Aging oversees the Connecticut Statewide Respite Care Program, which provides relief to caregivers with a loved one with Alzheimer's disease. This program is a needs-based, disease specific program. It is not of an entitlement nature. Public Act 09-75 requires annual adjustments to the eligibility parameters to reflect Social Security cost-of-living adjustments. These adjustments result in expanded eligibility for the program each year. Currently, the income limit is \$44,591 and the asset limit is \$118,549.

This program is utilized by both younger and older adults who may not qualify for any other program, such as the Connecticut Homecare Program for Elders (CHCPE), as well as low income older adults who are in urgent need of services while awaiting eligibility for the CHCPE and/or Medicaid. There is a co-pay requirement for the respite program but waivers may be granted to qualifying individuals. In fact, in FY 2015, 37% of the program participants were granted co-pay waivers due to minimal financial resources. If program eligibility is expanded without an additional appropriation, it is our concern that this would likely reduce the amount of funds available to serve those low income clients who are the greatest users of this program and most in need. Since there is not anticipated to be any additional appropriations to this program in the Governor's budget, we cannot support this proposal at this time.

This program has incredible value to caretakers who are working hard to keep their family members in their homes through some of their most difficult times. However, in the absence of additional appropriations, the impact of increasing the eligibility limit could effectively reduce the program's effectiveness in helping those most in need of respite.

Thank you for your attention and support for our Statewide Respite Care Program. I am looking forward to continuing to work with you as we search for ways to help families deal with this terrible disease.

